

Jordan L. Mott House
2122 Fifth Avenue
New York, N. Y.

HABS No. NY-450

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NY,
31-NEYO,
40-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 4
New York, N. Y.

Historic American Buildings Survey
Wakefield Worcester, District Officer
25 West 44th Street, New York, N. Y.

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JORDAN L. MOTT HOUSE
2122 Fifth Avenue
Borough of Manhattan, New York County, New York

Owner:

Department of Parks
New York City

Date of erection:

1880

Architect:

Unknown

Builder:

Unknown

Present Condition:

Demolished

Number of Stories:

Three stories and basement

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - Stone

Floors - Wood

Interior walls - Plaster on wood

Exterior walls - Brick with stone trim

Roof - tin

While this house is later in date and perhaps of a different character than was contemplated to be a proper subject for this survey, it seemed to be the last remaining example of its kind in this city, and also in danger of demolition. The story of its building was given to me orally by Mrs. Charles F. MacLean who was still occupying the house. It runs as follows:

During the 1870s New York was under the political dominance of what was called the "Tweed Ring", that is, Boss Tweed and his henchmen. This political machine was famous for its corruption which was quite generally known. One of these henchmen, known as Slippery Dick Connolly, set about having this handsome house built for himself. Everything was done with a lavish hand in the taste of the time and regardless of cost. Each piece of wood work, such as doors, door trim, mantels, etc. was in a way a piece of marquetry, many different woods having been used in inlays. The basic material for the interior trim was black walnut and the inlays were such as satin wood, ebony, cherry, and rosewood.

Shortly before the house was finished the political opponents of the Tweed ring were successful in exposing publicly the iniquities of its leaders. It created a major scandal and if they had been brought to court would probably have been sent to prison. To avoid this they fled the country, some going, it is said, to Canada and some to Mexico. At any rate Slippery Dick got away, leaving his unfinished house in the hands of an unpaid contractor. Jordan L. Mott then bought the house and finished it. He was the founder of the J. L. Mott Iron Works, and it was probably due to this fact that the house had considerable enrichment of ornaments.

iron. The front porch and the cresting around the roof are quite elaborate.

Mr. Mott's daughter married Judge Charles F. MacLean and she continued to live in the house until the end of 1936 when the property was acquired by the New York City Park Department and the house was immediately demolished.

Nowadays, we look upon this kind of house as being very much "out of atyle". Located at the corner of 130th Street and Fifth Avenue, this property is in the very center of Harlem and all buildings for blocks around are occupied exclusively by negroes. It has been a land mark on this account for many years.

Until the very end Mrs. MacLean entertained continually and her staff was as follows:

Secretary
Nurse
Butler
Man of all work
Chauffeur
Cook
Second maid

In the horse-and-buggy days, she had a negro coachman who with his wife and two children lived in the second story of the coach house. While the coachman and his wife died sometime ago the two children were still living there, rent free.

Wakefield Worcester
Wakefield Worcester, District Officer

June 23, 1937